



[William Crosfield Letters](#)

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Natural Bridge Virginia
80 Tuesday September 27/59

My dearest Bertha,

I have just been writing to mama, but as I have great doubts of it reaching home and if it ever does, when I shall write a letter to you ^{the letter} and post it somewhere else so as to make uncertainty as sure as I can. It seems a good while since I heard from any of you but in a few days I hope to find letters waiting for me and in a very short time after that some more so that frequency at last will make up for the long delay now. I am just now in a very out of the way place at the poorest inn that I ever stayed at, the man who keeps this house sold it and all his wretched furniture yesterday and is only waiting till I leave to shut up for I am now his only guest. I find that in travelling about now I am just at the end of every thing people have all gone home after the hot weather and no one will be moving about till a few set off to ramble among the woods and hills when all the trees have got their autumn colours which in this country are much finer than they are with us. I went out this morning to walk a short distance before breakfast

and saw one tree that looked
the most beautiful that I have
yet seen. It was what people here
call a Buttonwood, if you saw
it you would say that it was a
cannon and you would be right
to my idea, I was standing on a
point of rock hanging over a deep
gulf at the bottom of which a small
stream was running 300 feet below.
It looked straight down into it.
Just at my feet a pretty plant
of the Virginian Creeper was
climbing round the point of the
rock for it had struck its roots in
a narrow cleft in the rock some
few yards below; opposite me
was the bare face of the rock on
the other side of the valley with
a single plant of the creeper half-
up the side, on the top there was
a grove of true cedars and oaks and
pines which extended up the valley
to a bend where it was lost to my
view and in the middle of all
these dark green trees there stood
the buttonwood that I mentioned.
Its leaves were mostly of a light
spring green and as I looked
straight into the tree each bough
was distinct from the other and
between them there was such a dark
shade that it made the leaves

look so much greener by the
contrast, each of these ^{boughs} was tipped with
red as if swinging in the wind
every bough had dipped into a
stream of blood. The three colours
combined to make as perfect a
piece of nature as I should ever
wish to see. I am in the most
lovely part of this state, so every-
one tells me, for this is the Valley
of Virginia formed by the Blue
Ridge of mountains, as I came
along in the cars I was struck
by the change between eastern
Virginia which I had left at one
end of a long tunnel and this
Western part which we entered at
the other end. After the hills the
most striking objects of the valley
are the Weeping Willows they are
always beautiful trees but I have
seen several in this part of the
country at least 200 feet high
rising high high up like a huge
mountain of green drapery.

As I was coming along one lovely
starlight night I saw numbers

of glow worms by the sides of the road they were so bright that we could even see them when our lamps cast their broad light. I do not think that I told you a few days after I landed at Swanton taken by surprise to see one or two night bright lights moving about amongst the trees I thought what people were walking about with lanterns for, but soon saw such numbers of them that I found that they were fireflies flying in and out among the shrubs. There are such numbers of animals here that I never saw before - the chit munch or ground squirrel about the size of a kitten the usual brown colour of a squirrel with a broad black mark all the way down his back and he curls his pretty tail over his back as he starts to look at you from a log of wood or the top of a wall. The women in that I went at Mr Garrison's were startled by something flying into the room we shut all the windows and the door and then set about to catch it - it was a flying squirrel for about an hour five of us tried for it was only about the size of a cat and so quick it was like a fly

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"you put your finger on it and it isn't there" at last we caught him and put him into a glass jar to look at him. His colour was dark buff and his hair so soft, softer even than a mouse's, and then his little tail looked like a partridge's feather as he spread it over his back to hide himself. As soon as we opened the jar he flew away for his fore legs had wings like those of a bat so that he can fly a short distance, but he cannot fly up and if he wants to get to the branch of a tree he must climb up or fly from a higher point. There are a quantity of little black chit munch about this house they look such queer little things but some of them have bright sparkling eyes and white teeth looking so much whiter for their black faces. Some of them are free and some are slaves but I think the slaves as far as I have seen are treated better than "free niggers" as they call them, but then they are

their own and that will make
up for a great deal of ill usage won
it? I must finish for the present
and end my letter somewhere else
if I care for I have to begin my
stage journey.

Red Sweet Spring Mass

I should like just to add a few words
before I go to bed though I am very
tired tonight. I have travelled 13 hours
by stage today and only made a
distance of 34 miles so you may think
that it is very slow riding here in
Virginia. At three o'clock this morning
I was called up for the coach was
waiting for me. I was soon away
the morning was very misty and
it looked very curious to see the
landlord with a few clothes on as
possible holding a candle above his
head whilst the light fizzed and
crackled and spouted as if it felt
annoyed at being kindled so early
but it was not long before I forgot
all that in a dose which was broken
by the stage jolting over the corner
of a rock in the road and as we

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went slowly on jog-jog-jog sent
my head knocking against the
wood work of the coach till I was
wounded enough to sit straight
up for a little while and then I
tried to sleep a little but the result
was just the same and had to
give up trying. Several times lately
when I have been eating my meals
I have had a poor little slave boy
or girl waving a paper or feather
fan to blow away the flies, it
felt very curious at first but
now I am getting used to it, and
it comes quite naturally. Tomorrow
I cannot go more than 17 miles
but after that I shall go night
and day till Saturday evening.
Expect and hope for I want to be
rid of the uncertainty of staging.
The cocker and hens have a very
funny way of doing in this
country when every thing seems
to do just what it likes, instead
of going to roost on perches in a
hen house like reasonable birds,
as soon as they see says "good
night" they make a great flutter
and fly into a tree to sleep till
he comes back again.

White Sulphur Springs
Glad that by believing people
who knew nothing of what they
were talking have been done
completely and when might be
caught the stage this morning
I am left here till Sunday morn
and as I shall not go on Sunday
it will be Tuesday before I can start
So I shall push on in a private
buggy and must post this
without finishing it so good
in a great hurry with very much
love your very affectionate
brother Willie

Would you please ask papa
to send the accompanying
slip to Mr Winchester